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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a program designed to increase students' social skill development in order to improve positive peer interactions. The target population was elementary school students in one middle-to-upper class, rural community in central Illinois. Evidence for the existence of the problem of inappropriate social behaviors that interfere with peer interactions and relationships was documented through teacher observations, parental contacts, behavior infractions, and student survey and interview data. Analysis of professional literature and site-based inappropriate social development in children suggests a variety of probable causes. Evidence surrounding the type of viewing material and accessibility of television provide one probable cause. The study finds that change in family structure and the basic fiber of today's society, including parenting styles and role models, contributes to the lack of social skills in students. Teachers who resist social instruction in their classrooms are also a probable cause for this problem. A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with analysis of the problem setting, resulted in a three-pronged intervention: a series of learning activities that address the targeted social skills, the use of literature-based and role play instruction, and learning activities that employ cooperative learning. Postintervention data indicate an increase in student use of cooperative strategies, an improvement in the targeted social skills areas, and an increase in the appropriate formation of interpersonal relationships. Appendixes A-V provide activities used within the program; Appendix W is a bibliotherapy bibliography. (Contains 13 figures, 3 tables, and 35 references.) (Author/MKA)

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ED 434 295

# IMPROVING AGE APPROPRIATE SOCIAL SKILLS TO ENHANCE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

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## ABSTRACT

This study will describe a program designed to increase student social skill development in order to improve positive peer interactions. The targeted population will consist of elementary school students in one middle-to-upper class, rural community located in central Illinois. Evidence for the existence of the problem of inappropriate social behaviors that interfere with peer interactions and relationships will be documented through teacher observations, parental contacts, behavior infractions and student survey and interview data.

Analysis of professional literature and site-based inappropriate social development in children suggests a variety of probable causes. Evidence surrounding the type of viewing material and accessibility of television provided one possible cause. The change in family structure and the basic fiber of today's society, including parenting styles and role models, was found to be a contributor to the lack of social skills in students. Teachers who resist social instruction in their classrooms also surfaced as a probable cause for this problem.

A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of a three-pronged intervention:
a series of learning activities that address the targeted social skills; the utilization of literature-based and role play instruction; and learning activities that employ cooperative learning.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in student use of cooperative strategies, an improvement in the targeted social skill areas and an increase in the appropriate formation of interpersonal relationships.

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# CHAPTER 1

# PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

## General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted two kindergarten and one fifth grade classrooms exhibit inappropriate social behaviors that interfere with peer interactions and social relationships. Evidence for the existence of this problem includes teacher observations, student interviews and student survey data.

## Immediate Problem Context

The targeted elementary school is a part of a unit district comprised of an elementary school, junior high, and a high school building. The elementary school houses kindergarten through fifth grade students and has four classes at the second grade level and three classes at all other levels. It is a one-story brick building with three wings. The initial building was built in 1968 with the latest addition of six classrooms, a teachers' lounge, and a multipurpose room being added in 1996. There are 25 self-contained classrooms, most of which have restrooms. Those rooms without bathroom facilities use two centrally located restrooms. Classrooms are provided for two resource room programs, music, speech, Reading Recovery, and guidance. The new multipurpose room can be used as one large room for all-school activities or can be divided into as many as four large rooms using partitions. Band also meets in this area for the purpose of individual or group instruction. Six storage rooms are located on the perimeter of the multipurpose room, two of which are used for band instruments. Besides being used for physical education classes, part of the gym is used as a

lunchroom eating area with tables being set up daily at the noon hour. Adjacent to the gym is a kitchen where food is prepared for the hot lunch program. Centrally located, there is a learning center containing resource materials and a library facility. An adjoining room houses the technology lab. The offices of the principal and school secretary are located by the front entrance to the school.

Of the 967 unit district student population, 423 are elementary students. Within this elementary population, 99.3% of the students are White, 0.0% are Black, 0.5% are Hispanic, and 0.2% are Asian. The targeted elementary school has 4.5% of its students coming from low-income families. None of the students have limited English proficiency. The student mobility rate is 7.3%, with attendance being 97.0%. The number of low-income students over the past five years has remained relatively stable as has the mobility rate. The school retains few students. Retention, based on developmental readiness, is limited to kindergarten and first grade, a practice consistent with general educational research indicating that retention after first grade proves ineffective and negatively impacts a student's educational progress. Chronic truancy is 0.0% and therefore is not a problem.

Teachers at the targeted elementary school have an average teaching experience of 15.3 years with the average age being 39.5 years. Eleven teachers have a bachelor's degree and 16 have a master's degree. Seven teachers are in the process of completing a master's program at this time. Of the 27 teachers, the physical education teacher is the only male. Average salaries for the district in 1996 – 1997 were $34,185 for teachers and $56,366 for administrators. The operating expenditure per pupil was $4,331. The elementary school pupil teacher ratio is 21.3:1.

School personnel at the targeted elementary school include four teachers at the second grade level and three teachers at all other levels, one physical education teacher, one vocal music teacher, one speech therapist, two special education teachers, one Reading Recovery teacher, one technology lab teacher, one learning center aide, three teacher aides, two student aides and a part-time guidance counselor. In addition, there are two full-time custodians, a building principal, and a school secretary.

The targeted elementary school begins the school day at 8:00 a.m. and concludes at 2:50 p.m. Students at this school in grades first through fifth leave their classroom a total of five hours per week for learning center, technology lab, music, and physical education classes. Kindergarten students leave their classrooms a total of one hour and fifteen minutes per week for the above mentioned activities.

Within the classroom, the students are exposed to a wide variety of language experiences. Instruction ranges from the use of basal texts, whole language, novel units, and author studies. Activities include sustained silent reading, choral reading, cooperative projects, responsive and reflective logs, book talks, classroom discussion, decoding strategies, phonics reinforcement and spelling.

The Reading Recovery Program is an early intervention reading program in which intensive instruction and support in the development of effective reading strategies is implemented by a 30 minute daily pull out program. First grade students are placed in this program through screening guidelines established by the Reading Recovery program.

With the adoption of a new math series, the math curriculum encompasses the

use of manipulatives, problem solving, and computation skills. Many teachers have been trained in the *Math Their Way* and *Math: A Way of Thinking* programs which are integrated into their math instruction.

The science and social studies programs are often integrated across the curriculum. Many methods of instruction are used, including the use of the scientific method and hands on activities. Many teachers use the *Activities That Integrate Math and Science* materials for science instruction, and *Nystrom* kits for geography instruction.

Four years ago, the targeted school adopted a formal inclusion program in which students with individual education plans were placed in one classroom per grade level. Special Education students are placed in these classrooms after a multi-disciplinary conference determines their eligibility. The two resource teachers, one of whom services kindergarten through second grade students and the other servicing third through fifth, collaborate with the regular division teachers to meet the needs of all the students.

At this time, regular division teachers implement the art curriculum without the aid of a specialized art instructor. Presently, the identified gifted students are not involved in a formal, gifted program. Teachers attempt to address the needs of those students within the classroom. The technology teacher is currently involved in gifted training to provide support to the classroom teachers. The speech teacher not only pulls students out for individual instruction, but also works with teachers in the collaborative classrooms. The guidance counselor is available for individual sessions on a referral or as-needs basis as well as presenting group activities within the classroom. Optional

extra-curricular activities include a vocal group called the Master Singers, beginning band instruction, a choral reading group, and a chess club. These activities are available for the fourth and fifth graders.

## The Surrounding Community

The targeted community is a traditional, somewhat conservative town made up of primarily middle- and upper-middle class families. It has a small town atmosphere, strong civic involvement, and an emphasis on the family. The community is characterized by a strong sense of "hometown" pride. The total population of the community/district is 5,353 people. The population breakdown shows that 99.6% are White, 0% Black, and the remainder consists of a small percentage of Hispanic and Asian. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the population has graduated from high school, with 15% graduating from college.

Recent demographics indicate that 56.9% of these households are made up of one or two people. Approximately 47% of the households have children under the age of eighteen. About 34% of the households have occupants 65 or older. A noteworthy statistic is the fact that 81% of the students live in a traditional two-parent home. Furthermore, 96% of these homes have at least one parent employed. About 52% of the community work in traditional white-collar professional and technical areas.

There is strong church involvement in the community. Two large Apostolic Christian churches, a Baptist church, and a Methodist church are located within the city limits and have large, active memberships.

The community has a desirable geographic location for those who wish to escape the urban setting and is highly accessible to larger cities. This community is centrally

located between Peoria, Pekin, and Bloomington/Normal. With good highway access to these areas, many residents commute to Mitsubishi Motor Manufacturing of America, State Farm Insurance, or Caterpillar for employment. The area is much less dependent on Caterpillar than it was in the early 1980's. The community has recently shown signs of expansion in the local economy.

The targeted community has one unit school district serving a 68 square mile area. There is a principal at the grade school, junior high, and high school, and also a district superintendent. Those wishing to relocate perceive the school district as excellent because of its low student-to-teacher ratios. The elementary school has a strong volunteer program. Approximately 40 parents assist the staff and students on a weekly basis. Their assistance comes in many forms, such as working with small groups of students, clerical help, putting up and taking down bulletin boards and displays.

Besides having two community parks maintained by the park district, two small lakes have been opened to the public for fishing. For recreational activities, there are softball, baseball, and super softball leagues. In addition to a swim team, swimming lessons are offered at the community pool.

Every summer on the first full weekend in June, a community wide festival raises approximately $40,000.00. This money is dispersed to various organizations within the community. The festival is totally operated by volunteers.

The Lion's Club, Kiwanis, Commerce Association, Garden Club, Masonic Lodge, Women's Club, Home Extension and several 4-H Clubs are active organizations in the community. A community building is available for public use.

As well as the above positive aspects of the community, there are some valid concerns. The dynamics of the community are gradually changing due to the deterioration of the traditional family unit. As stated before, the general makeup of the area is that of a conservative, white-collar community. It has, however, experienced an increase in divorce, single-parent families, and latch-key children.

The Zoning Board, consisting of seven appointed members of the community, in joint effort with the school board, has responded to an interest in promoting community development. Land formerly used for agricultural purposes has been purchased and developed into three new subdivisions within the city limits, providing both single- and multi-family dwellings. It is, however, an opinion of prospective community members that housing and rental prices are too high, therefore limiting various socio-economic groups.

The issue of impending tax caps has become a recent issue with school employees, board members and community members. The superintendent of the targeted school district has embarked on a community-wide crusade to persuade voters that tax caps will have a negative impact on the school functioning and resource allocation.

A last concern of the targeted community is the increased desire and need for technological education. The cost per student in terms of technology is currently the lowest in the immediate geographic area. It is a concern that the district will not be able to meet the growing needs of the students with this low spending. Recent discussion regarding additional technology services includes internet access throughout the district and a possible inter-district internet web.

## National Context of the Problem

Social development has been described by researchers as "the process through which children, as well as adults, learn the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to acquire social competence" (Elias et al., 1997, p.2). Family life is our first school for such learning. This schooling not only comes through things parents say and do, but also through the models they offer in everyday living. Today, however, children spend much less time with their parents and other adults who are close to them. A higher number of working parents, divorce, abuse, poverty, drugs and other factors are now interfering with healthy parenting. This is affecting children's development of social skills (Johnson and Johnson, 1995).

It is becoming increasingly evident that students are entering the educational system without this very form of crucial development. According to Elias, it is this development that provides young people with the ability to positively manage life tasks, such as solving problems and conflicts, forming relationships, and everyday learning (1997). Without these skills, much of what is considered academic learning cannot and will not take place, and hazards await those children not mastering these skills. A massive survey of parents and teachers shows a worldwide trend for the children of today to be more angry and unruly, more impulsive and aggressive; in short, more troubled socially (Goleman, 1995).

Changes in family structure, including dual-working parents, single parents, and even homeless children, as well as the negative character formation attributed to the anti-social, anti-caring behaviors modeled on television are also two factors contributing to this change (Bellanca, 1992). Many educators have seen the ramifications of these

factors and have become increasingly aware that the lack of social skills must be addressed by the educational system. In fact, there is a growing body of evidence that children with enhanced skills have a firm foundation for not only behavioral success, but also successful cognitive development and that true academic success cannot be reached without social learning. Social learning is, in fact, "the missing piece" (Elias et al., 1997, p.1).

# Chapter 2

# PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

## Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of inadequate social skills in students, several methods of data collection were used. Classroom discipline records and parent contacts were documented. Observation checklists using a rated scale were kept and student interviews/questionnaires were designed and implemented to assess the students' understanding of the targeted social skills.

Of the 77 students involved in the study, all participated in either a one-on-one interview or a student-completed questionnaire. Students at the fifth grade level completed a four-question questionnaire (Appendix A) during class time. Kindergarten students were involved in a teacher-directed, four-question interview (Appendix B). Each question aimed at assessing one of four targeted social skill areas: peer interactions, listening, sharing, and self-control.

The assessment of knowledge of/understanding of interaction skills was based on the students' understanding of the concept of complimenting. Students who answered with a complimentary statement were scored as having an appropriate understanding. If no response or a response other than a compliment was given, the responses were deemed inappropriate. The researchers found that many fifth graders possessed the knowledge needed to give compliments. It was also noted that most kindergartners could not respond or responded with inappropriate answers or phrases such as thank you and please.

The researchers defined appropriate listening as having hands and feet still,

looking at the speaker and keeping lips quiet. Responses were scored as inappropriate unless all three areas were mentioned. Terms such as whole-body listening and active listening were accepted.

The social skill area of sharing was assessed according to unconditional willingness to share personal property. It was considered that the students showed an understanding of this concept if they replied as such. Most students seemed to have acquired an understanding of sharing skills.

The final area, that of self-control, dealt with students' ability to express their reaction to conflict. Students who grasped the meaning of self-control conveyed an understanding of conflict resolution skills and addressing a problem verbally rather than physically. Walking away and ignoring the situation were considered inappropriate because they did not address the issues of anger and frustration.

The responses to the questions in the above-mentioned areas were scored as appropriate or inappropriate using a rubric (Appendix C). The results of the rubric scoring were compiled and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Student Responses to Social Skills Questionnaire/Interview Questions, September, 1998

| Targeted Social Skill Areas | Appropriate | Inappropriate |
|---|---|---|
| Peer Interactions | 56% | 44% |
| Listening | 13% | 87% |
| Sharing | 88% | 12% |
| Self-control | 49% | 51% |

N=77

As the data in Table 1 indicate, children have the greatest understanding of the concept of sharing and the least understanding of the skills needed for listening appropriately. Student responses to hypothetical situations show that approximately half of the students lack an appropriate understanding in the social skill are s of self-control and peer interactions. This information is further illustrated in Figure 1.

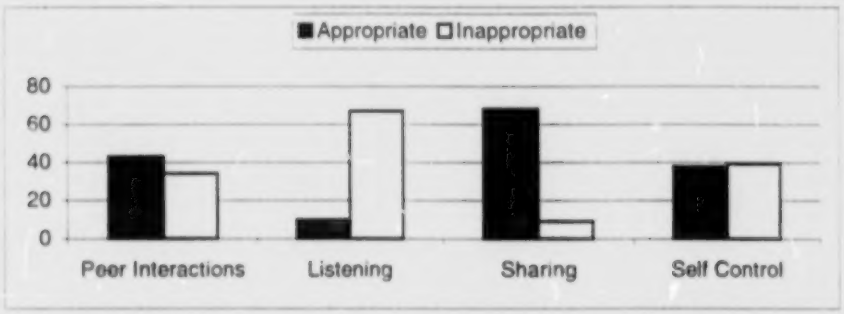


Figure 1. Frequency of appropriate and inappropriate interview/questionnaire responses in targeted social skill areas for the targeted classes, September, 1998.

A checklist was developed for each of the four social skill areas and students were observed during class time in a variety of social settings.

The checklist observing interaction skills (Appendix D) focused on three specific areas: working and playing cooperatively, saying nice things and showing a willingness to compromise and negotiate. Listening skills were observed in three ways: having hands and feet still, looking at the speaker, and being able to keep lips quiet (Appendix E). The criteria used to assess sharing skills were taking turns appropriately, exhibiting a willingness to share personal as well as community property (Appendix F). The last social skill area of self-control looked at students' abilities in following rules

independently, dealing with frustration appropriately and managing anger properly (Appendix G).

All four areas used a rating scale, which designated student behaviors as frequently, sometimes and not yet. A numerical value of one to three, respectively, was assigned to each rating. A composite score was generated for each child by adding the three areas of each checklist. Composite scores therefore ranged from three to nine. Lower scores indicated mastery of the targeted skill. Scores were separated into areas of above average (three, four and five), average (six) and below average (seven, eight and nine). The composite scores from all three classes were tallied and are presented in Figures 2,3,4 and 5.

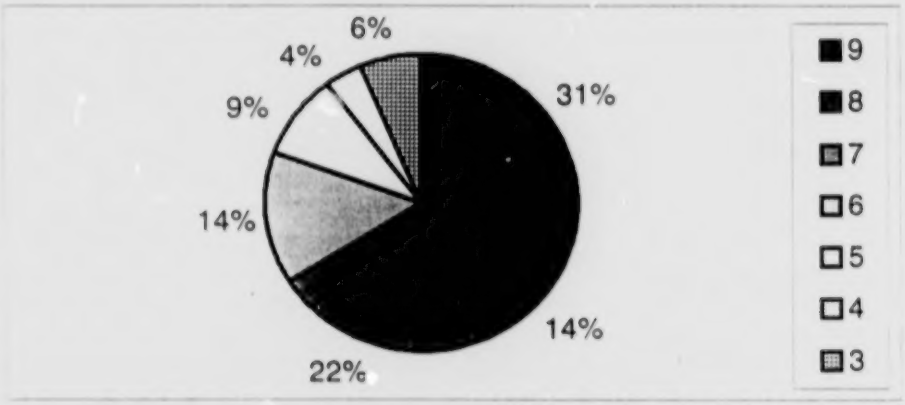


Figure 2. Percentages of composite scores as generated by the peer interactions checklist, September, 1998.

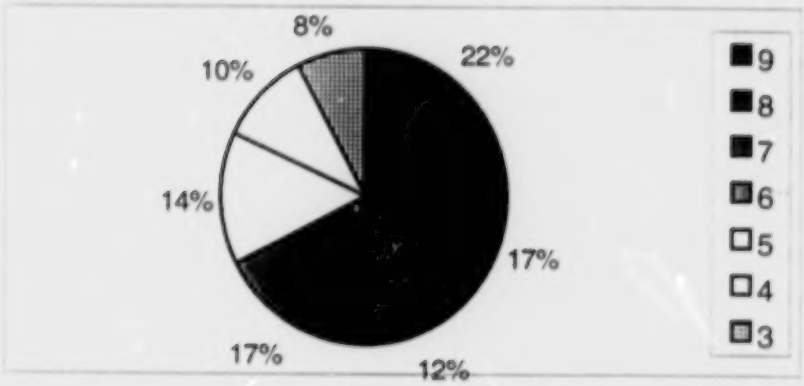


Figure 3. Percentages of composite scores as generated by the listening checklist, September, 1998.

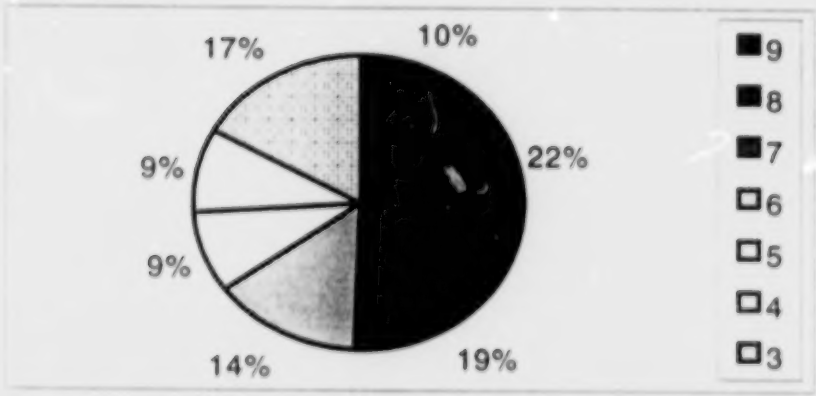


Figure 4. Percentages of composite scores as generated by the sharing checklist, September, 1998.

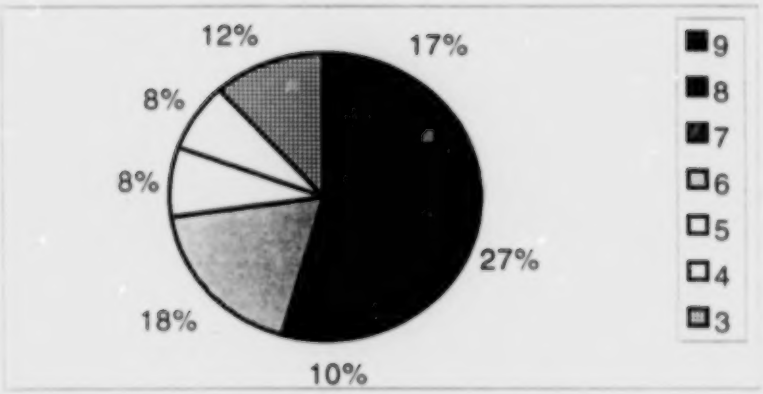


Figure 5. Percentages of composite scores as generated by the self-control checklist, September, 1998.

As indicated in Figure 2, only 33% of the students exhibited above average or average interaction skills. An overwhelming 67% of students had below average or poor skills of this kind. Almost one-third (31%) of the total students scored the lowest possible rating of nine, indicating this as a skill area needing to be addressed.

Figure 3 showed 51% of the students with below average listening skills. Forty-nine percent demonstrated average or above average skills. Although this is a comparable division, it is still viewed as an area of concern. In looking at Figure 4, sharing skills had a similar breakdown in terms of below average and above average skill areas. When further analyzed a much higher percent of students scored extremely low in the area of listening skills as compared to sharing. Twenty-two percent scored a

nine in listening, whereas only 10% in sharing. Regardless of the individual breakdown of scores, the compiled score of 51% in the below average skill level in both of these areas is a definite concern.

The area of self-control represented in Figure 5 showed the below average scores to be 54% with the average and above average scores being 46%. These percentages as well indicate a need for positive instruction.

The researchers found it interesting to compare the interview/questionnaire responses in Figure 1 with the observable behaviors recorded in Figures 2,3,4 and 5. The students were able to give appropriate responses especially in the area of sharing, but they did not actually exhibit the skills when interacting with others. There was a similar discrepancy in how well students understood positive interactions and how well they demonstrated this understanding.

The researchers developed a disciplinary action form (Appendix H), which was used to record inappropriate behavior in the classroom. After tallying behavior infractions through the first five weeks of school, numbers showed 120 recorded incidences. Further analysis found that these infractions were consistently committed by the same students. Teacher A found 36% of the class members to be responsible for these infractions. Teacher B similarly found 35% of the students to be involved. Teacher C recorded 38% of the class to be the perpetrators.

Researchers also separated the recorded infractions into the four social skill areas that are of concern. The results are recorded in Figure 6.

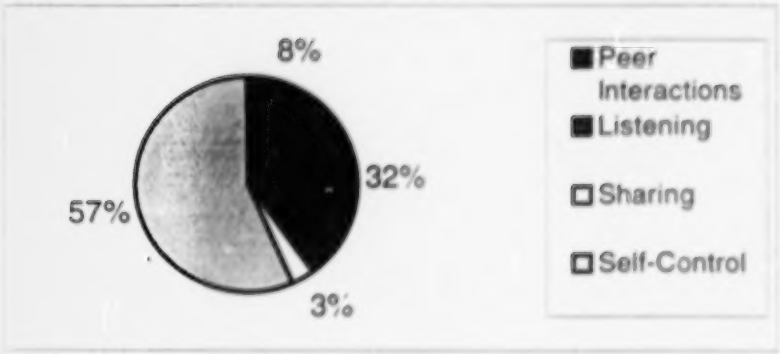


Figure 6. Percentages of types of recorded behavioral infractions, September, 1998.

Information obtained from Figure 6 indicates that student misbehavior in the classroom whether it be kindergarten or fifth grade, generally presents itself in the form of a lack of self-control and poor listening. The areas of sharing and peer interactions were not as problematic. It was interesting to note that although the observation checklist data indicate peer interactions as a major concern, it did not appear as often when taking disciplinary action in the classroom.

In order to document the frequency and manner in which parents were contacted, the researchers created a parent contact form (Appendix I). Teachers contacted parents through the use of notes, phone calls or personal conferences. These data are represented in Table 2.

Table 2

Categories and Number of Parent Contacts During September, 1998

| Type of Contact | Teacher A | Teacher B | Teacher C |
|---|---|---|---|
| Note | 18 | 6 | 6 |
| Phone Call | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Conference | 0 | 1 | 5 |

As indicated in Table 2, parents were most frequently contacted by note. Parents of kindergarten students were contacted more often by note, realizing that the students were becoming acclimated to a more structured situation. Conferences were held more often in fifth grade due to the fact that certain behaviors were expected with this age group. In all, the total number of parent contacts made at the beginning of the 1998-1999 school year was 39.

## Probable Causes

Why has education seen an increase in children's inappropriate social behaviors and poor peer interactions? It could be the pervasiveness of television in children's lives today. It could also be the dissolution of the traditional family, as well as the lack of appropriate role models in and out of the family unit. Societal changes appear to be a factor. Another possible reason for this increase may be that teachers have found themselves unable or unwilling to address the problem. Professional literature suggests these as being probable causes (Elias, Butler, Blum and Schuyler, 1997).

Children today live in a television-saturated world. Many children are spending more time in front of the television and less time involved in constructive activities. It is estimated that children watch TV an average of 17 hours a week and that by the time

they reach high school, they will have spent twice as many hours watching TV as they will have been in school (Abbot, 1994). While these statistics are overwhelming and disheartening, they become even more so when one considers what these children are viewing.

James Bellanca (1992, p. 202) stated, "television, with its aptitude for modeling anti-social, anti-caring behaviors, has filled a void in the character formation of today's youth." One need only listen to students' daily conversations in and out of their classrooms to see and hear mimicking of explicit language, adult situations and rude behaviors as seen in society's prime time "family" shows. Television now imposes adult material on grade-schoolers before they are equipped to deal with it appropriately (Lawrence, 1993).

This inappropriateness of viewing material can be seen not only in television programs but also in the video games and cartoons that children so avidly play and watch. Studies show that most video games actively encourage aggressive, competitive behaviors and violent problem solving (Lawrence, 1993). Studies also show that cartoons contain more violence, thus having a negative impact on children's socialization. Children who were shown cartoons with such animated violence were more likely to hit, call names, and not follow classroom rules (Abbot, 1994).

These issues are compounded by the problem of the lack of parental supervision when dealing with children's television use. The decrease of adult supervision, support and direction, has created the electronic baby-sitter, having a negative influence on young minds (Bellanca, 1992). This lack of supervision allows these children to not only view possibly inappropriate material, but it creates a situation in which the children's

major form of socialization is the TV or computer. The personal interactions between children, as well as with adults, have diminished to the point that relationships and the social skills needed for forming them are now lacking.

The lack of parental supervision pertaining to television viewing may stem from an even greater problem: the change in the traditional family unit. This may be another probable cause for the increase in children's inappropriate social behaviors. The definition of the traditional family has changed from what we used to know. Sociologists have noted the change, documenting single-parent, dual working parent and no-parent homes, which result in parents having less time to properly supervise their children. These children therefore come to school without basic social skills in place (Bellanca, 1992).

A void is therefore created due to the aforementioned family structures, possibly resulting in a lack of quality parental involvement in children's lives that can lead to inappropriate parenting styles and skills. Effective parenting takes time and skill. With the excessive demands of society on today's parents, even the most well-meaning working parents have less time than before to reinforce social learning (Greene, 1998). Parents and children have also experienced a loss of the extended family, further contributing to the dissolution of what was known as the traditional family.

Children today are also finding it difficult to identify with strong and appropriate role models. Because of the increase in single families, many children are missing a significant role model in their lives. They therefore turn to television and outside forces to fill that void. Bellanca and Fogarty (1991, p. 48) stated "the norms learned from TV's humor, sports figures, and the playground may be negative." This negativity can create

inappropriate behaviors and social expectations. Society is full of negative role model characters like "Beavis and Butt-head," "The Simpsons", and high profile professional athletes, sending messages of rudeness, poor sportsmanship and lack of self-control to our nation's children.

The onslaught of negativity in society today is a simple indicator of what this society has become: socially toxic (Garbarino, 1997). It is filled with crime, hate, violence, drugs and abuse, all of which have been thrust upon the innocence of children. Dobson (1998) stated that the "viciousness" and antagonistic behaviors that children learn come from the highly competitive "hostile world" in which they are living. When one considers all of the obstacles with which even the smallest of minds are faced it is no wonder that the behaviors in our school's classrooms are inappropriate. Today's children are facing a complex world, confronting temptations and facing more than any other generation (Tyree, Vance and McJunkin, 1997).

All of these causes of children's inappropriate behaviors stated thus far stem from forces outside the school, but what about those within the school? Teacher resistance to teaching social development as well as their inability to address the problem is a definite contributor to the lack of social skills in children. "Many teachers neither view the development of social skills as within their purview nor believe they have the time and expertise to infuse social skills training into their classroom routines" (Maag and Webber, 1995, p. 13). Teachers and society members as well, view the responsibility of schools as promoting academics. Imparting social learning to students is not generally a priority for many educators. As the need for this type of education has developed, it has been met with much resistance. Teachers contend with overcrowded

curriculums, the demands of standardized testing and lack of appropriate professional development in the area of social learning, making the integration of social skills into classrooms a burdensome task (Elias et al., 1997).

Within the targeted school district, the changing population could be a factor in the students' lack of appropriate social skills. This small town community is beginning to feel and see the effects of the socially toxic world and the break down of the traditional family.

With the average age of the targeted school staff being 39.5 years, much of the instructional practice reflects a more traditional style. Many teachers are hesitant when confronted with new trends or research and lack the training in these newer areas. Lack of district funding impedes teachers in their ability to further their professional development.

Unless the issue of social learning is addressed, it will be difficult for students to develop appropriate social skills and acquire positive interpersonal relationships.

# CHAPTER 3

# THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

## Literature Review

Today, students are exhibiting a lack of appropriate social behaviors in the classroom. These behaviors interfere with peer interactions and social relationships. Probable causes contributing to this problem include issues of society, the family, and within the school itself.

Unlike other historical issues of school reform and academic problems cited in today's educational system, the concern surrounding the need for social learning is fairly new. It is, however, extremely important. Educators recognize that social development is a natural part of learning, but often it is underestimated just how much it affects students' success in school. Social skills are therefore rarely taught systematically. A formal approach to social learning will particularly help children develop positive peer interactions, form relationships and deal with conflicts (Knapczyk and Rodes, 1996).

There are many ways in which educators can address the problem of inappropriate and lax social skills in students. Some of the possible solutions may be used together, or independently, as an educator deems necessary in his or her classroom. The important issue to be considered in our ever-changing world is that schools today must be "committed more deeply than ever before, to paying attention to the social lives and well being of young people" (Lantieri and Patti, 1996, p. 29).

Implementing a behavior modification plan with students who lack targeted social skills is one possible intervention to help shape behavior. Behavior modification uses

positive reinforcement, such as smiles, hugs or tokens for appropriate social actions, thus stimulating spontaneous use of those behaviors. Some teachers use this type of intervention as a solution to social problems that occur within their classrooms.

A form of behavior modification more recently recommended deals with the use of natural consequences for actions rather than rewards. Evans (1996) stated that when teachers allow students to experience the "reality of a situation", the child then learns from that experience instead of the teachers demands or incentives.

A second aspect of addressing this problem is the involvement of parents in the children's school life. Jackson, Jackson and Monroe (as cited in Armstrong and McPherson, 1991) advocate a form of social skill "homework" that directly involves parents observing and practicing social skills that have been taught in the classroom with their children in a more natural and spontaneous social setting.

In Illinois, through the US Department of Education's "Follow Through" Program, parents were shown how to work cooperatively and reinforce the attitudes of the caring classrooms being developed through the program (Bellanca, 1992). Both of these programs have shown the positive effects of parental involvement on students' social learning.

Likewise, the School Development Program, directed by James Comer, has worked for over 25 years as a positive model for schools that want to work with families to create a caring community in their schools. Comer stated that they led the way in the deepening of family involvement in schools and that the need is ever increasing in today's changing society. Connecting the home and school is a must (O'Neil, 1997).

The involvement of parents can be achieved not only through actual programs as stated above, but through simple procedures used daily by teachers. Notes sent to the home, home consequences for in-class behavior and parent training programs in behavior management are some suggestions (Armstrong and McPherson, 1991). Teachers can point out positive skills and interactions that parents can use with their children at home. Discussing options for conflicts, endorsing pro-social strategies, encouragement, and promoting positive attitudes are among other skills that can be emphasized at home (Mize and Abell, 1996). Parental involvement can play a major role in the development of positive social skills.

Another possible solution for dealing with social skills in students is the development of a proactive discipline plan through a democratic classroom. In a democratic classroom, students can learn to negotiate conflicts, work together cooperatively and effectively and respect one another (Daniels, 1993). Proactive classroom management, likewise, helps students become self-managers as they learn to disagree in appropriate ways and interact effectively (Cummings and Haggarty, 1997).

One authority on proactive discipline is Jane Nelsen, the renowned author of various books for educators and parents on the subject of Positive Discipline. Her work is based on a philosophy of learning respect and dignity, developing social and life skills and the success that grows from this process. Her program accomplishes positive classroom discipline through encouragement and democratic class meetings that strive to develop cooperation, positive resolution of problems and peer acceptance and respect (Nelsen, 1996).

In Pinellas County, Florida, three programs using principles based on the psychologist Alfred Adler have found that using a democratic classroom, managed through student-directed class meetings, has produced the best student/teacher relationships and the most orderly classes (Evans, 1996).

Michelle Zachlod, a first grade teacher at Robert Ulrich Elementary School and California State University Education lecturer, has found throughout her career that giving children the opportunity to make decisions and take responsibility in their classrooms allows them to acquire a self discipline that is long lasting and transferable. It also helps to develop a sense of ownership in the classroom. These characteristics foster generosity, caring, positive interactions and cooperation with peers as well as teachers. She stated that a "powerless child demands attention through negative behavior." Children involved in student-generated activities and a democratic classroom "have no need for the extreme demands for attention that are labeled as discipline problems" (1996, p. 53).

In Texas, more than 10,000 kindergarten through twelfth grade students are involved in the Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline project, which uses preventative discipline, cooperation and community to allow students to become real partners in the classroom. It bases its program on research findings that show that 80% of classroom management difficulties stem from lack of prevention rather than intervention. Spending time during the first weeks of school to develop mutual respect, and allowing students to set high standards for themselves is a key. The program advocates are not only teaching democracy, but practicing it, improving opportunities for

students to become "citizens" of their classrooms, rather than "tourists" (Freiberg, 1996).

Professionals in the educational field support the use of a democratic classroom and proactive discipline as a means to increase appropriate social behaviors in students. Still another possible way to deal with this difficult problem is through the use of conflict resolution techniques. McCabe and Rhoades (1992, p. 215) stated that "conflict is a normal part of any relationship development process, whether between two people or among a group." It can occur at any time during a group development process, so educators need to be well equipped to deal with it. Conflict resolution can provide the means with which to do this.

There are three basic components to conflict resolution as developed by Johnson and Johnson (1995): mediation, negotiation and arbitration. Students learn the skills necessary for each of these components and work together to use them to settle quarrels nonviolently when they arise.

William Kreidler (1994), an internationally known expert in conflict resolution, has written several books for educators to help them effectively implement programs in their classrooms. His conflict resolution education is not meant to eliminate conflict altogether. It strives to help children learn from conflict and use it constructively. His programs promote win-win solutions, where all parties feel good about the resolution.

Teaching lessons that develop conflict resolution skills directly in the classroom can help students acquire communication skills, respect and empathy, self-awareness and a positive self-concept. All of these skills provide students with tools to deal with disagreements, small or large, in a positive way (Jasmine, 1997).

In New York, the Resolving Conflicts Creatively Program has been implemented in some schools. Developers feel today's schools need a more committed vision for dealing with the social needs of students. The program, with its training in mediation, negotiation and peaceable conflict resolution has had a positive effect on students' social learning (Lantieri and Patti, 1996).

It can be seen that conflict resolution has its merits as a possible solution to dealing with inappropriate social behavior. Knowing that 40% of students who lack appropriate means for dealing with conflicts will become felons in today's society, the need is also very evident (Holden, 1997).

The implementation of a social learning program has also shown to be effective in dealing with the lax social skills of students. Students can be taught to interact positively and utilize learned social skills. A pre-developed curriculum can help educators with this endeavor.

In Teaching Social Competence, Knapczck and Rodes (1996) stated that the systematic teaching of social skills is necessary. They advocate that a formal approach to dealing with social learning is helpful to reach students who cannot learn social skills indirectly or for those that have chronic social problems. Many such programs are in place and have been shown to be effective in various classroom settings.

Lawhon (1997), as well, reported on a study done by Maurice Elias and Roger Weissberg in 1990 that investigated a program that taught relationship skills to students. The program was found to enhance the students' social skills of cooperation, conflict solving, sharing and accepting others.

*The Personal Responsibility Education Process* is another program that has had positive results when implemented with school children. Schools using this program have shown a decrease in discipline referrals as well as an increase in the pro-social behaviors associated with citizenship (Moody and McKay, 1993).

*The Teaching Social Skills Program* is a co-teaching model based on the belief that all students can learn social skills. It focuses on incorporating the instruction of social skills into the teacher's normal classroom routine. Using this program, students learn appropriate skills, perform those skills and thus develop them to be used in everyday life (Warger and Rutherford, 1993).

Many educators use a variety of methods to teach social skills. These methods are enhanced when an organized program is in place, and a variety of programs exist to provide another solution for dealing with the lack of social skills in the students of today (Elias, et al., 1997).

A child's success depends in large part on social skills. These skills are, in fact, a form of second language (Kain, Downs and Black, 1988). Whether educators use a formal program to address these needs or teach explicit social skills in their own way, students will acquire the life tools needed to be successful in society.

Social skills instruction can have a long-term positive effect on students' interactions with others, and studies show that teachers who do teach social skills are more satisfied with their classroom environment. The University of Washington has created a staff development program to assist teachers in explicitly teaching social skills, as they have seen the growing need for this type of instruction (Cummings and Haggarty, 1997).

Daily activities should be saturated with social skill instruction and opportunities for students to practice these skills as they work and play together. The possibilities of which social skills to teach are endless but it is vital that basic social skills are in place for student success (Bellanca, 1992).

Daniel Goleman (as cited in Pool, 1997), author of Emotional Intelligence, stated that the acquisition of appropriate social skills is an important component of learning, and should be incorporated into every part of school life. Goleman dedicated a whole chapter in this book to "the social arts." He stressed the importance of developing self-control in children, thus allowing for the building of other social competencies. He stated the lack of these skills can cause children to flounder in interpersonal relationships. Even the brightest students can have difficulties forming positive relationships when lacking these important skills. Goleman went so far as to state that students with deficits in social learning appear to be "arrogant, obnoxious, or insensitive" (1995, p. 113).

A prerequisite to academic achievement must be the development of a stable foundation of appropriate social skills (Warger and Rutherford, 1993). Acquiring social skills not only strengthens academic achievement but also allows students to positively interact with others and form social relationships. The United States Department of Labor report lists such interpersonal skills as essentials for high school graduates (Cummings and Haggarty, 1997).

In order for our students to come away with these skills instructors must explicitly teach what social behavior is expected and acceptable. The benefit of this type of instruction will be valuable, life long skills. As Kain, Downs and Black (1988) stated:

Technology may change, places may change, but basic human nature will stay the same. Likewise, the way to deal with people -- the basic social skills -- will remain the same. It is up to us, then, to instruct our students in the fundamental social skills.

The integration of social skill practices can create a thematic bond through the use of children's literature. Children are exposed to the literature as the springboard for learning about social skills. Students examine the characters in different stories and learn life lessons from the ways these characters solve problems and interact with others. (Bellanca, 1992). By using literature-based instruction and role-play, social skills can be infused into all curricular areas. Bibliotherapy, a technique that involves the use of books that present social challenges to children, can be used as an effective curricular tool. Interactive participation and the use of puppets can also enhance social learning (Jones, 1994). A variety of social skills can be explored by using children's literature. William Kreidler (1994) viewed children's literature as an "ideal vehicle" for teaching social skills.

A last possible solution for addressing inappropriate social skills in students is the use of cooperative learning. Cooperative learning involves more than just working together. It consists of a teacher's conscious effort to assemble groups and structure activities in order to promote positive social interactions. As an instructional process cooperative learning inherently helps students develop responsibility, enhance self-esteem and gain social skills (McCabe and Rhoades, 1992).

Beginning in 1983 with the publication of A Nation at Risk, the issue of curricular reforms has been brought to the forefront. One noted area of needed reform was

identified as students' abilities to work cooperatively together to solve problems and complete tasks (Warger and Rutherford, 1993). This implies the need for cooperative learning instruction within the educational system.

Cooperative learning provides teachers with an effective tool for teaching students relationship skills that will be a benefit in life. It stresses social skills and develops a sense of community where students can achieve (Shaw, 1992). Educators can make a difference in choosing to make changes from the traditional methods of instruction. They can provide students with a caring, cooperative classroom without the negative atmosphere of competition.

Schools can create positive and lasting relationships among students through the use of cooperative learning. Studies by Johnson and Johnson (1995) have shown that learning together can "profoundly" affect students. It promotes positive relationships and results in increased social competence. They believe schools can teach children how to cooperate and share and they should teach children how to work with and be committed to others. The assumption that these skills will be learned outside of school is inaccurate. Johnson and Johnson's research calls our attention to the distinct and ever-growing need for cooperative learning in today's schools to help reach the goal of providing students with the social life skills so necessary for developing relationships now and in their futures.

Spencer Kagan, a leading proponent in the research and development of cooperative learning techniques since the early 1980's, is an active advocate of using cooperative learning in the classroom. He believes educators should consider

cooperative learning because it broadens students' experiences including interactive learning, communication skills and social skills, all of which are increasingly in demand. He views a change in society as one moving away from an individualistic workplace to one that is increasingly interdependent. The workplace today consists of people working together to solve problems. Therefore schools must place in high priority the instruction of communication and social skills. An obvious way to achieve this goal is through cooperative learning. No other instructional strategy has been more thoroughly researched than cooperative learning. The findings are overwhelmingly positive. Cooperative learning improves relationships, improves social skills and improves the affective development of students (Kagan, 1992).

One goal of education is to prepare children to be active and responsible citizens. In order for them to be able to accomplish this successfully, they must be made aware of and have opportunities to practice appropriate social behaviors. These learned social skills will better prepare them for their future in academic, social and career goals (McCabe and Rhoades, 1992).

When educators have a fuller understanding and willingness to incorporate a social learning curriculum, using techniques such as cooperative learning and conflict resolution, students will be more prepared for their roles in society.

## Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of altered instructional strategies focusing on the explicit teaching of social skills during the five month period of September 1998 to February 1999, the students of the targeted two kindergarten and one fifth grade classes will exhibit an increase in appropriate social behaviors as measured by classroom discipline records, teacher-made checklists of targeted behaviors, and parent contacts.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. A series of learning activities that address the targeted social skills will be developed and implemented.
2. Materials that foster the utilization of literature-based and role play instruction of social skills will be implemented.
3. A series of activities that employ cooperative learning will be implemented.

Action Plan

***Process Statement One:***

A series of learning activities that address the targeted social skills will be developed and implemented.

WHO: Participants of process one include students of the targeted two kindergarten and one fifth grade classes, instructed in a whole group setting.

WHY: Process one will increase the development of students' social skills and peer relationships.

WHAT:

- Identify the targeted social skills as listening, sharing, peer interaction, and self-control skills.
- Articulate components of each social skill.
- Implement a variety of learning activities that explicitly teach these targeted social skills.
- Randomly assess social skill usage through teacher observations and checklists.

WHEN: One targeted skill will be taught on a weekly basis for 30 – 45 minutes per week. Four weeks will be designated to address the components of each skill.

WHERE: Process one will take place in three self-contained, regular education classrooms in an elementary school.

**Process Statement Two:**

Materials that foster the utilization of literature-based and role play instruction of social skills will be implemented.

WHO: Participants of process two include students of the targeted two kindergarten and one fifth grade classes, instructed in both a whole group setting and small peer groups.

WHY: Process two will reinforce and strengthen students' awareness and use of the targeted social skills.

WHAT:

- Accumulate literature-based materials that address the targeted skills.
- Implement learning activities that incorporate these materials, using class discussion, student writing, modeling and role play.

WHEN: A minimum of one 30 – 45 minute learning activity will be presented every two weeks during the period of the project intervention.

WHERE: Process two will take place in three self-contained, regular education classrooms in an elementary school.

**Process Statement Three:**

A series of activities that employ cooperative learning will be implemented.

WHO: Participants of process three include students of the targeted two kindergarten and one fifth grade classes. A variety of grouping methods will be used, including whole group instruction, base and task groups of 3 – 5 students and diads.

WHY: Process three will increase the development and use of students' social skills during peer interactions.

WHAT:

- Arrange furniture and materials to be conducive to cooperative learning.
- Introduce and develop the cooperative learning methods of classbuilding and teambuilding.
- Implement a variety of cooperative learning activities in various academic and social areas.
- Utilize several cooperative learning techniques such as jigsaw, think-pair-share and numbered heads together.
- Randomly assess social skill usage through student reflections and teacher observations.

WHEN: Task groups will work together a minimum of two times per week for 15 – 45 minutes during the period of the project intervention.

WHERE: Process three will take place in three self-contained, regular education classrooms in an elementary school.

## Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, behavioral observation checklists were created to document the frequency of targeted behaviors according to a numerical value. A rubric was also developed to assess student responses to interview questions and questionnaires. Running record forms were created to document parent contacts and classroom disciplinary action.

# CHAPTER 4

# PROJECT RESULTS

## Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of the project was to examine the social learning of students and determine if explicit instruction in social skills would help students develop more positive interpersonal relationships. In order to accomplish this purpose, an action plan was designed that targeted four particular social skill areas: peer interactions, listening, sharing, and self-control. Within these areas, specific social skills activities were developed and implemented, cooperative learning strategies and methods were employed, and bibliotherapy and role play instruction was utilized.

Cooperative learning was implemented to teach social skills and to provide situations in which students could practice these skills. Within the first four weeks of the intervention, a variety of class-building activities were used to create an atmosphere of camaraderie. Classbuilding allowed students to get to know their classmates, respect each other's diversities and find ways they are the same. An example of a class-building activity used at the beginning of the school year was a "Sharing Shield." (Appendix J) Students created a shield that included aspects of their lives. The shields were then shared with their classmates in a cooperative setting and displayed as a representation of the entire class.

During this same four-week period, base group teams and a variety of different task groups were also developed. Base groups are defined as long-term heterogeneous groupings. Such groupings were used for extensive cooperative projects and critical thinking projects. Task groups are defined as formations such as

partners, triads or random groups that are utilized for more short-term, routine objectives. Task groups were used for checking homework, practicing spelling words and shared reading. Base group teams created at the fifth grade level were changed periodically, a total of three times throughout the intervention. The kindergartens kept base group teams consistent for the entire twenty weeks. In order to promote cohesive teamwork, activities that familiarized team members with one another and built team trust and acceptance were employed. One such activity was the creation of team names and flags.

In addition to the above-mentioned strategies a variety of other cooperative structures were used during weeks five through twenty. These strategies and structures fostered sharing, listening, peer interaction and compromise, and the use of appropriate voice levels while working in a group setting. These were all targeted areas of explicit instruction throughout the intervention. A cooperative strategy used often in both the fifth grade and kindergartens was "Think-Pair-Share." (Appendix K) This activity was taught as a means to stimulate students to share information about a topic or concept with a partner and promote attentive listening. Additional activities of this kind can be found in Appendices L, M, N, and O.

The original action plan called for biweekly activities lasting 15 to 45 minutes each. During several weeks throughout the intervention, the researchers had to deviate from this plan due to holiday activities, special events and parent conferences. During those weeks in which the plan was followed, cooperative base groups were an instructional strategy used to accomplish content objectives as well as social learning objectives. Lessons were modified to accommodate cooperative tasks in areas of

science, mathematics, language arts and social studies. A sample of a fifth grade and kindergarten lesson is included in Appendices P and Q.

A second means of reaching the project objective was the development and implementation of a series of learning activities that addressed the targeted social skills. Prior to the intervention period, the skills of peer interactions, listening, sharing and self-control were selected as critical to the development of appropriate social relationships.

The action plan stated that one targeted skill would be explicitly taught on a weekly basis for 30-40 minutes per week. Lessons at the fifth grade level began the second week of school and progressed according to the plan. During some weeks of the intervention, more than one lesson was taught. The kindergarten teachers, however, found that a period of adjustment to the structure and size of the new educational setting was necessary for their students. While all targeted skills were addressed and stressed daily, explicit lessons did not begin until the fourth week of school.

Taking into consideration the difference in learning styles of fifth grade and kindergarten students, the manner in which the skills were taught was very different. The fifth grade teacher introduced each skill with a looks like/sounds like T-chart, beginning week two and continuing through week five. Listening was introduced first, followed by self-control, peer interactions, and sharing. Students brainstormed ideas of what each skill would ideally look like and sound like. The T-charts were posted and referred to throughout the intervention. Other charts referring to the specific skill areas were also posted. A sample T-chart is found in Appendix R.

Listening skills were found to be low in the fifth grade students; therefore,

instruction of listening skills progressed throughout the entire intervention from the introductory T-chart in week two to a weekly lesson in the components of good listening. This included lessons on listening for information, listening to categorize, listening for big ideas and details, listening as an audience member and many others. An example of a fifth grade listening lesson is included in Appendix S.

Self-control was addressed further with periodic lessons on anger, caring, coping and feelings and attitudes. These lessons were not consecutive, but rather were presented bimonthly. Students were engaged in whole-class and small group discussions, independent writing and student reflections in these areas.

The development of appropriate peer interactions was also addressed bimonthly, and was done based on the needs as they presented themselves in the classroom. The teacher developed lessons based on student observations and interactions, fostering skills of caring attitudes, kind words, and appropriately dealing with difficult social situations.

If was found that at the fifth grade level, the students had an understanding of the concept of sharing. Lessons directly teaching this skill were therefore not needed as readily and were replaced by lessons in the other areas.

The kindergarten teachers similarly introduced each social skill area within weeks four through seven with a looks like/sounds like T-chart. (Appendix R) To reinforce each skill a stuffed animal mascot (Appendix T) was developed to provide a visual association for each skill. Teachers introduced the mascot with each T-chart, beginning with listening, and continuing on to self-control, peer interactions and sharing. Mascot pictures and the T-charts were posted for daily reference. In the weeks that followed, a

song was learned dealing with each skill area (Appendix U) and a class book was created in which the students contributed a page showing how they use the skills. (Appendix V)

The third and final avenue of our intervention was the use of bibliotherapy and role play. The intervention action plan called for a bimonthly learning activity in one of these areas. The researchers found bibliotherapy was a more practical form of addressing social issues and it was therefore used more often. Books were chosen based on how well they addressed targeted social skill areas. These read aloud books were used bimonthly as a lesson for one of the skills, followed by discussion and/or an activity. In the kindergarten classrooms, the children's literature was also used as a springboard for role-play activities. It was found that the fifth grade students did not respond as positively to role play and it was therefore not utilized. A bibliography of bibliotherapy literature can be found in Appendix W.

## Presentation and Analysis Results

In order to analyze the effectiveness of the intervention, the students were assessed on their understanding of each of the four targeted skills. The process of this analysis was one-to-one interviews at the kindergarten level and a whole-group questionnaire at the fifth grade level. Responses to the questions on the above-mentioned documents were scored as appropriate or inappropriate and compared to the students' responses to the same questions from pre-intervention data. The results are reflected in Table 3.

Table 3

Student Responses to Social Skills Questionnaire/Interview Questions, September, 1998 and January, 1999.

| Targeted Social Skill Areas | Appropriate | | Inappropriate | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | September | January | September | January |
| Peer Interactions | 56% | 94% | 44% | 6% |
| Listening | 13% | 55% | 87% | 45% |
| Sharing | 88% | 96% | 12% | 4% |
| Self-control | 49% | 60% | 51% | 40% |

N=77

As the data in Table 3 indicate, students' understanding of appropriate listening skills greatly increased, by 42%. Students' understanding of peer interactions increased by 38%. Students already had a well-developed concept of sharing and therefore the difference was relatively low. However, the small increase brought on by the intervention raised the total to near 100%. The information is further illustrated in Figure 7.

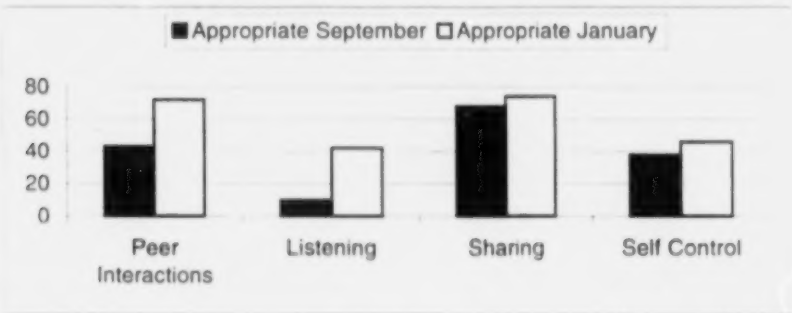


Figure 7. Frequency of appropriate interview/questionnaire responses in targeted social skill areas for the targeted classes, September, 1998 and January, 1999.

The researchers informally observed students in the four social skill areas and recorded the information on behavior checklists as post-intervention data. The same rating scale used for pre-intervention observations was also used at this time. This rating scale designated student behaviors as frequently, sometimes, and not yet. A numerical value of one to three, respectively, was assigned to each rating. A composite score was generated for each child by adding the three areas of the checklists. Composite scores then ranged from three to nine, with lower scores indicating mastery of the targeted skill. Scores were separated into areas of above average (three, four and five), average (six) and below average (seven, eight and nine). The composite scores from all three classes were tallied and compared to pre-intervention composite scores. These data are presented in Figures 8,9,10 and 11.

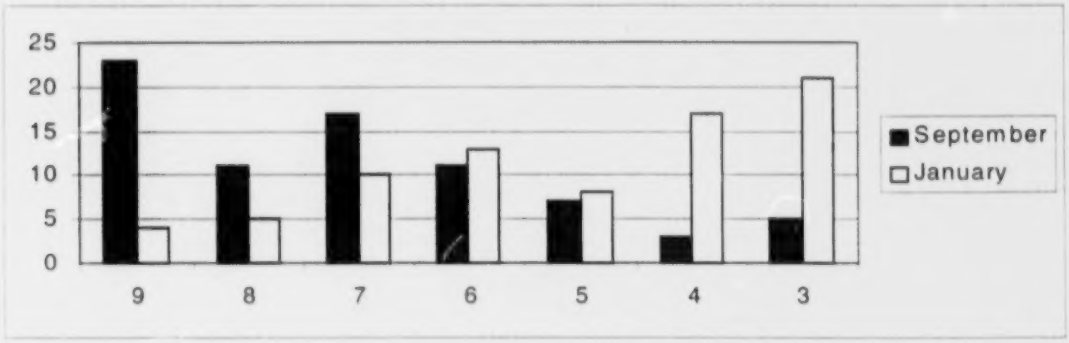


Figure 8. Peer interactions composite scores as generated by the checklist, September, 1998 and January, 1999.

As indicated in Figure 8, prior to the intervention the majority of students fell below average in the skill area of peer interactions, with the highest score of nine being

the most frequent score. Following the intervention the majority of students fell above average, with the lowest score of three, indicating mastery, being the most frequent score.

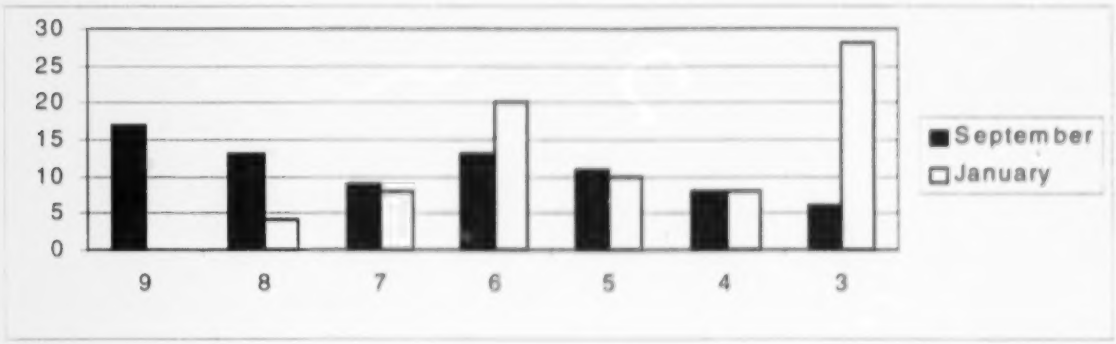


Figure 9. Listening composite scores as generated by the checklist, September, 1998 and January, 1999.

As the data in Figure 9 indicated, there was a marked improvement in the students' mastery of listening skills. In September, only six students readily used appropriate listening skills whereas by January approximately four times that number, twenty eight students, were using these skills appropriately. To further illustrate the marked improvement in listening skills, only 4 out of 78 students (5%) displayed inappropriate listening skills in January as opposed to 30 out of 77 (39%) in September.

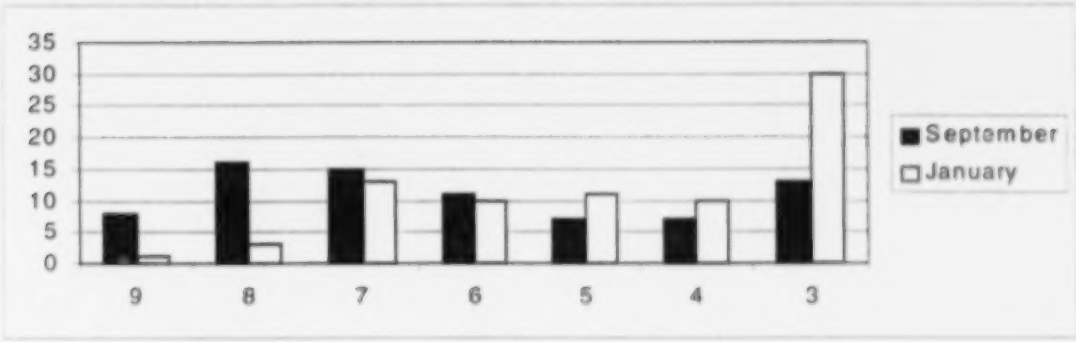


Figure 10. Sharing composite scores as generated by the checklist, September, 1998 and January, 1999.

While Figure 10 represented the area of least concern (sharing) to the researchers, a steady growth occurred with a dramatic increase in mastery in the targeted skill.

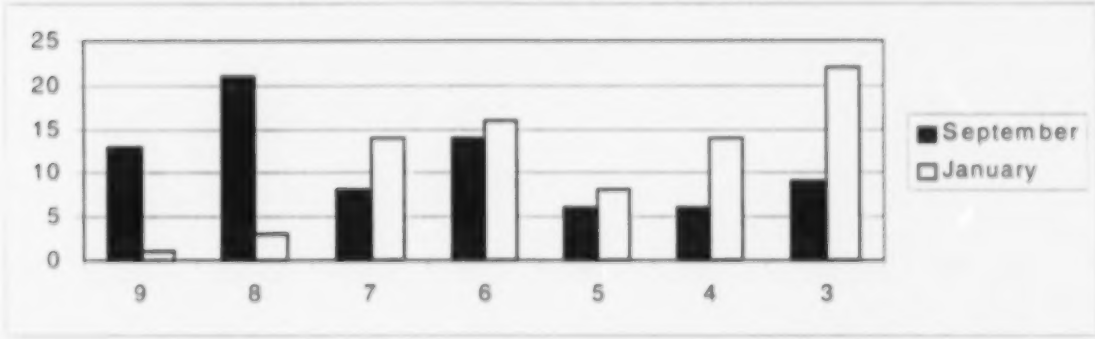


Figure 11. Self control composite scores as generated by the checklist, September, 1998 and January, 1999.

The area of self-control illustrated in Figure 11 demonstrated a similar positive growth. The majority of students, 42 out of 77 (54%), scored below average in

September and only 21 out of 77 (27%) scored above average. After the intervention only 18 out of 78 (23%) scored below average and the majority, 44 out of 78 (56%) scored above average.

As the data showed, a positive growth was evident in all targeted skill areas. Such an outcome was the desired goal of the researchers and indicative of a successful intervention.

The researchers also compared inappropriate classroom behavior as it occurred prior to the intervention and after. Behavior infractions were tallied for the last five weeks of the intervention and compared to those of the first five weeks. During those first five weeks 120 behavior infractions were recorded. This number decreased drastically to 47 during the last five weeks of the intervention. The researchers found, in most cases, the infractions were committed by the same students both at the beginning and the end of the intervention. Even though these students continued to be involved in inappropriate actions the researchers did note a decrease in the frequency of undesirable behaviors. In separating the recorded infractions into the four targeted social skill areas , as shown in Figure 12, it can further be seen that the two most prevalent areas of concern, listening and self-control, decreased in number of incidents recorded.

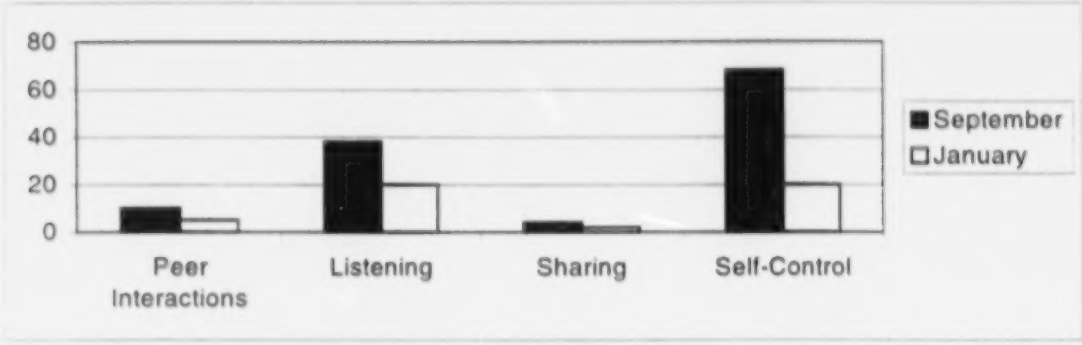


FIGURE 12. Number of behavioral infractions as recorded on the disciplinary action form, September, 1998 and January, 1999.

The researchers also noted a decrease in the total number of parental contacts regarding behavior infractions, as illustrated in Figure 13.

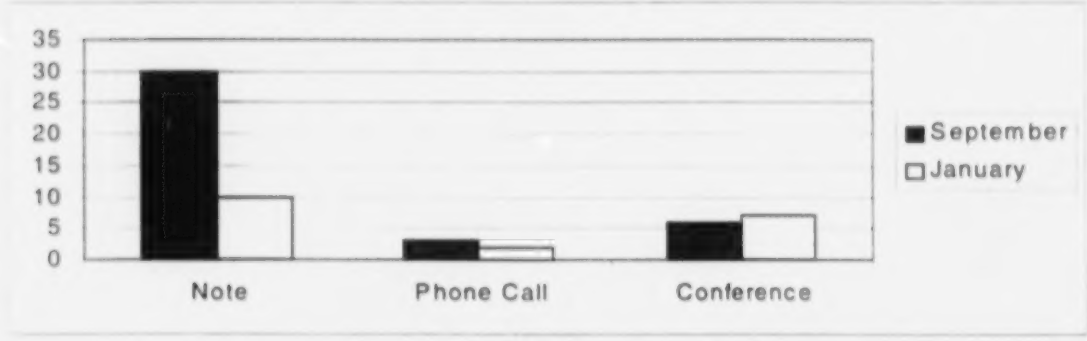


FIGURE 13. Categories and number of parent contacts during September. 1998 and January, 1999.

The number of notes sent home to parents decreased by one third from September to January. Although the number of conferences and phone calls did not decrease as notably, the numbers stayed fairly consistent.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data, students exhibited marked improvement in their use of age-appropriate social skills and developed more positive interpersonal relationships. The number of discipline infractions decreased as recorded on the disciplinary action forms. The behavior observation checklists used to assess the frequency of appropriate targeted social skills reflected the positive effect the intervention had on the students. The social skills learned during cooperative learning activities and through explicit social skill instruction appeared to have transferred to interpersonal relationships, and contributed to the overall success of the intervention.

After careful consideration, the teacher researchers believe some recommendations should be addressed. Due to the difficulty in recording behaviors for the observation checklists while maintaining the management of the classrooms, it is recommended that an aide assist in the documentation of behaviors. Furthermore it should be stressed that younger children be allowed a transition period before the initiation of the action plan. The researchers found this to be necessary for optimal benefits to the students. The importance of classbuilding and team building prior to or as a foundation for cooperative learning activities is also recommended.

The teacher researchers felt as a result of the intervention, students were empowered to become more socially adept and were given the tools to develop more positive interpersonal relationships.

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# Appendix A

## Fifth Grade Four-Question Questionnaire

Fifth Grade Questionnaire

Name:_____ Date:_____

What do you do when you know someone needs your markers?

_____

_____

_____

What do you do when you know someone else has done something wonderful?

_____

_____

_____

What does it mean to be a good listener?

_____

_____

_____

What do you do when you are really mad at someone?

_____

_____

_____

# Appendix B

## Kindergarten Four-Question Interview

Kindergarten Questionnaire

Name:_____ Date:_____

What do you do when you know someone needs your crayons?

_____

_____

_____

What do you do when you know someone else has done something wonderful?

_____

_____

_____

What does it mean to be a good listener?

_____

_____

_____

What do you do when someone hits you and it makes you really mad?

_____

_____

# Appendix C

## Interview / Questionnaire Rubric

Interview/Questionnaire Rubric

Name: _____ Date: _____

Criterion:
1. responds inappropriately or not at all
2. responds appropriately

1.

| 1<br>Comments | 2<br>Comments |
|---|---|

2.

| 1<br>Comments | 2<br>Comments |
|---|---|

3.

| 1<br>Comments | 2<br>Comments |
|---|---|

4.

| 1<br>Comments | 2<br>Comments |
|---|---|

# Appendix D

## Interaction Skills Checklist

### Observation Checklist for Targeted Social Skill

Assessment of Interaction Skills

Teacher _____ Class _____ Date _____

Ratings
1 = Frequently
2 = Sometimes
3 = Not Yet

| NAMES OF STUDENTS | Works/plays cooperatively | | Says nice things (compliments/ encourages) | | Willing to compromise/negotiate | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | | | | |
| 2. | | | | | | |
| 3. | | | | | | |
| 4. | | | | | | |
| 5. | | | | | | |
| 6. | | | | | | |
| 7. | | | | | | |
| 8. | | | | | | |

# Appendix E

## Listening Skills Checklist

**Observation Checklist for Targeted Social Skill**

Assessment of Listening Skills

Teacher _____ Class _____ Date _____

Ratings
1 = Frequently
2 = Sometimes
3 = Not Yet

| NAMES OF STUDENTS | Hands and feet still | Looks at speaker | Lips quiet | Interrupts appropriately | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | |

# Appendix F

## Sharing Skills Checklist

**Observation Checklist for Targeted Social Skill**

Assessment of Shanng Skills

Teacher _____ Class _____ Date _____

Ratings
1 = Frequently
2 = Sometimes
3 = Not Yet

| NAMES OF STUDENTS | Takes turns appropriately | | Willing to share personal belongings | | Willing to share community property | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | | |

# Appendix G

## Self Control Checklist

**Observation Checklist for Targeted Social Skill**

Assessment of Self Control Skills

Teacher _____ Class _____ Date _____

Ratings:
1 = Frequently
2 = Sometimes
3 = Not Yet

| NAMES OF STUDENTS | Follows rules independently | | Deals w/ frustration appropriately | | Manages anger properly | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | | |

# Appendix H

## Disciplinary Action Form

Classroom Disciplinary Action Form

Teacher _____

| Student | Date | Infraction | Action |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

# Appendix I

## Parent Contact Form

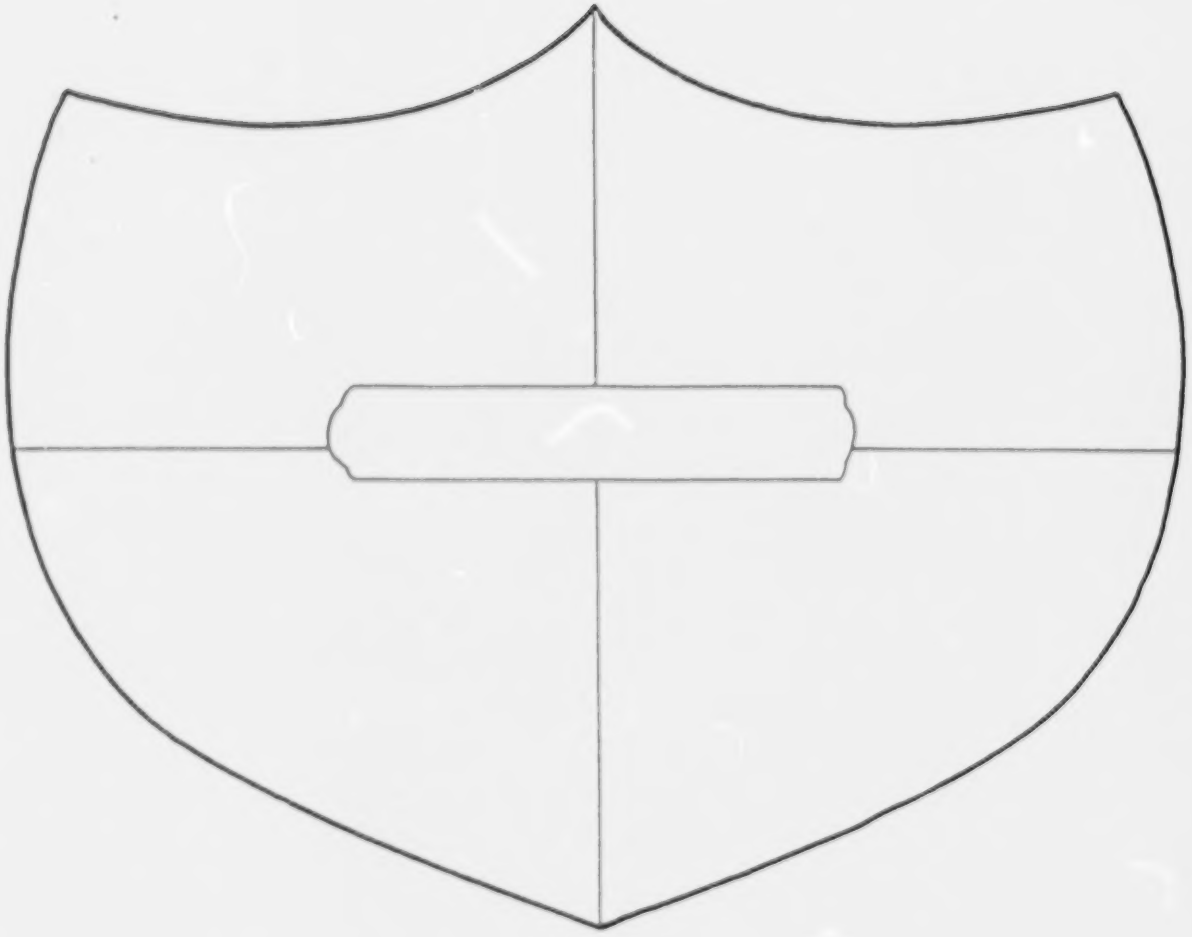
Parent Contacts

Teacher _____

| Student | Date | Infraction | Note/Phone/Conference |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Appendix J

Sharing Shield



Appendix K

Think-Pair-Share

Activity Overview:

- Assign or allow students to randomly select a partner
- Teacher poses a question
- Provide one minute think time
- Students share answer with their partner
- Teacher gives the silent signal after a pre-determined time
- Students then share thier partner's ideas with the class

# Appendix L

## Inside-Outside Circle

Activity Overview:

- Half the students form an inner circle
- Half the students form an outer circle
- Students stand or sit facing a partner in the opposite circle
- Students share answers, ideas, or perform drill practice
- Students in the inner circle stay in one place
- Students in outer circle move to the next person
- Activity is repeated as deemed necessary by the teacher

# Appendix M

## Jigsaw

Activity Overview:

- Students are assigned to or select a team of several students
- Each team member is assigned an expert group
- Each expert group works together to research a particular area of the content being studied
- Expert group members then takes this information back to their base group teams
- Each team member teaches the other team members what they have learned in the expert group

# Appendix N

## Numbered Heads Together

Activity Overview:

- Students are assigned to or select a team of about three or four students
- The students in each team are numbered
- The teacher poses a question
- Teammates put heads together to discuss the question
- Teammates agree upon one answer
- The teacher gives the silent signal
- The teacher calls one number
- The student in each team that was assigned that number is allowed to share the team answer with the class
- The activity is repeated as deemed necessary by the teacher

# Appendix O

## Roundtable

Activity Overview:

- Students are assigned to or select a team of about three or four members
- Members are assigned a number
- The assignment begins at member number one
- Member number one completes his portion of or contributes to the assignment
- The assignment is passed to member number two
- Member number two completes his portion of or contributes to the assignment
- The assignment continues to pass from each member until it is completed

## Appendix P

## Fifth Grade Cooperative Lesson

Activity Overview:

- The students move into pre-assigned base groups
- Students brainstorm what they know and what they want to know about the content topic of "Colonial Times"
- Ideas are recorded on notebook paper
- Base groups then receive chart paper on which they create a KWL chart
- Base groups design and create the chart's shape, size, color and any other element they prefer to utilize
- Brainstormed information is then transfered onto the K and W portion of the team chart
- Each group orally shares their charts and information
- The L portion of the chart is completed at the end of the unit of study in similar fashion
- Charts are displayed

Appendix P (continued)

Fifth Grade Cooperative Lesson

| K<br>(What we know) | W<br>(What we want to know) | L<br>(What we have learned) |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

## Appendix Q

## Kindergarten Cooperative Lesson

Activity Overview:

- The students will work in pre-determined base group teams
- The materials manager of the team will collect the needed materials (coins, tally/graph sheet, pencil)
- The groups will brainstorm how they might create a graph with these materials
- The students will be instructed to sort the money according to the value of the coins
- After sorting, the teams will roundtable count and tally each coin pile on the tally/graph sheet
- The students will work together to transer this tally data into a bar graph
- Each group will share their graph with the class

Appendix Q (continued)

Kindergarten Cooperative Lesson

**Name:**_____ **Name:**_____

## Tally Your Money

| 1c | 5c | 10c |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

## Graph Your Money

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1c | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5c | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10c | | | | | | | | | | |

Appendix R

T-Chart

**Topic:**_____

| Looks Like | Sounds Like |
| --- | --- |
| | |

# Appendix S

## Fifth Grade Listening Lesson

Activity Overview:

- Students will listen to oral paragraphs in order to glean and record factual statements and opinions
- Students are given a two cloumn chart in order to record this information
- The teacher reads a pre-determined informational article, pausing at the end of each paragraph
- At this pause, students are to list the items that are facts and the items that are opinions on the chart
- Items may be a few key words from the sentences
- Article is then reread and the whole group identifies items that should have been recorded
- The teacher provides tips for better listening

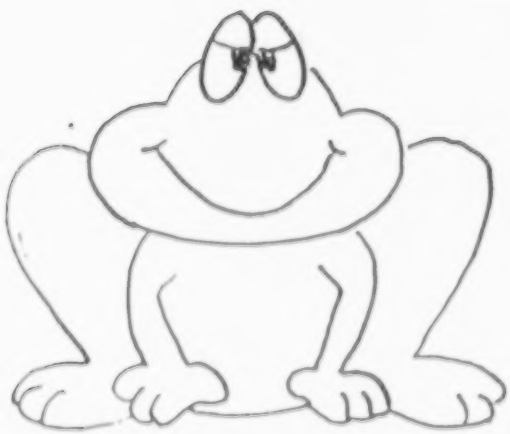
| | Fact | Opinion |
|---|---|---|
| Paragraph 1 | | |
| Paragraph 2 | | |
| Paragraph 3 | | |
| Paragraph 4 | | |
| Paragraph 5 | | |

Appendix T

Kindergarten Social Skills Mascots

Sammy the Self Controlled Seal

Petey the Polite Pig



Freddie the Friendly Frog

Larry the Listening Lion

Appendix U

Kindergarten Social Skill Songs

## Sammy's Song

(Tune: I'm a Little Teapot)

I have self control, yes I do.
I control my anger and frustration, too.
When I get upset,
Here's what I'll do,
I'll STOP! and try to talk to you.

I have self control, yes I do.
I know the rules and I follow them, too.
I try to be the kind of person who
Will follow the rules whatever I do.

## Petey's Song

(sing to Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star)

We are friends, yes we are,
Cooperation is our star!
To the left and to the right,
We will help you to be bright!
We are friends, yes we are,
Cooperation is our star!

We are friends, yes we are,
Cooperation is our star!
To the sky and to the ground,
We will praise you all around!
We are friends, yes we are,
Cooperation is our star!

We are friends, yes we are,
Cooperation is our star!
To the east and to the west,
Cooperating is the BEST!
We are friends, yes we are,
Cooperation is our star!

## Freddy's Song

Tune: (Did You Ever See a Lassie?)

We share the things in our class, in our class, in our class
We share the things in our class,
It makes us feel good.

We take our turns in our class, in our class, in our class
We take our turns in our class,
We know that we should.

We're happy in our class, in our class, in our class
We're happy in our class,
It's a GREAT neighborhood!

## Larry's Song

(Tune: If You're Happy and You Know It)

When someone talks to me, I'm a listener.
When someone talks to me, I'm a listener.
My hands don't move no more,
And my feet stay on the floor,
When someone talks to me, I'm a listener.

When someone talks to me, I'm a listener.
When someone talks to me, I'm a listener.
My eyes stay straight ahead,
And I repeat what they have said,
When someone talks to me, I'm a listener.



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# Appendix V

## Kindergarten Social Skill Class Books

Sammy taught me to have self-control:

I_____

_____

Petey taught me to be polite:

I_____

_____

Freddy taught me to be friendly:

I_____

_____

Larry taught me to be a good listener:

I_____

_____

Appendix W

Bibliotherapy Bibliography

A Friend Like Ed by Karen Wagner, Scholastic Inc., 1998

A Great Attitude by Sandi Hill, Creative Teaching Press, 1998

Barney Says, "Please and Thank You" by Stephen White, Lyrick Publishing, 1994

Being Bullied by Kate Patty and Charlotte Firmin, Aladdin Books, 1991

The Berenstain Bears and The Bad Habit by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House, 1986

The Berenstain Bears and The Bully by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House, 1993

The Berenstain Bears and The Double Dare by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House, 1988

The Berenstain Bears Forget Their Manners by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House, 1985

The Berenstain Bears Get in a Fight by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House, 1982

The Berenstain Bears and The Homework Hassle by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House, 1997

The Berenstain Bears and The In-Crowd by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House, 1989

The Berenstain Bears Say Please and Thank You by Stan and Jan Berenstain, GT Publishing, 1996

The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Pressure by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House, 1992

The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Teasing by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House, 1995

Appendix W (continued)

Bibliotherapy Bibliography

The Berenstain Bears and the Trouble with Friends by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House, 1986

By Myself or with My Friends by Kimberly Jordano, Creative Teaching Press, 1998

Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes, The Trumpet Club, 1991

Dinofours: I'm Super Dino! by Steve Metzger, Scholastic, Inc., 1997

Dinofours: I'm the Boss! by Steve Metzger, Scholastic, Inc., 1998

Feeling Left Out by Kate Petty and Charlotte Firmin, Aladdin Books, 1991

Franklin Is Bossy by Paulette Bourgeois, Scholastic, Inc., 1993

Franklin's Secret Club by Paulette Bourgeois, Scholastic Inc., 1998

Hang On, Hopper! By Marcus Pfister, Scholastic, Inc., 1995

How Leo Learned to Be King by Marcus Pfister, Scholastic, Inc., 1998

I Like Me! by Nancy Carlson, The Trumpet Club, 1988

I Try to Be a Good Person by Trisha Callella-Jones, Creative Teaching Press, 1998

I'm Terrific by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat, Holiday House, 1977

Just Say Please by Gina and Mercer Mayer, Golden Books Publishing, 1998

The Land of Many Colors by Klamath County YMCA Family Preschool, Scholastic, 1993

Listen Buddy by Helen Lester, Scholastic, Inc., 1995

The Listening Walk by Paul Showers, The Trumpet Club, 1961

Little Polar Bear and the Brave Little Hare by Hans de Beer, Scholastic, Inc., 1998

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Me Too! by Mercer Mayer, Western Publishing Company, Inc., 1983

My Friend Bear by Jez Alborough, Scholastic, Inc., 1998

One of Each by Mary Ann Hoberman, Scholastic, Inc., 1997

Pass the Peas, Please by Dina Anastasio, Warner Juvenile Books, 1988

Perfect Pigs: An Introduction to Manners by Marc Brown and Stephen Krensky, Scholastic, Inc., 1983

Petey and I: A Story About Being A Friend by Martha Conn, Western Publishing Company, 1973

Pooh: I Can Share, Too, by Caroline Kenneth, Golden Books, 1997

Playing the Game by Kate Petty and Charlotte Firmin, Aladdin Books, 1991

The Popcorn Dragon by Jane Thayer, Scholastic, Inc., 1953

A Porcupine Named Fluffy by Helen Lester, The Trumpet Club, 1986

Rabbits Habits, by Jan Belk Moncure, The Child's World, Inc., 1988

SORRY: What Does It Mean? by Susan Riley, Childrens Press, 1946

This Room Is Mine: A Story About Sharing by Betty Ren Wright, Western Publishing Company, 1977

Time for School, Nathan! by Lulu Delacre, Scholastic, Inc., 1989

Two Is a Team by Lorraine and Jerrold Beim, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1945

We Are All Alike . . . We Are All Different by Cheltenham Elementary School Kindergartners, Scholastic, Inc., 1991

We Can Get Along by Lauren Murphy Payne, Free Spirit Publishing, 1956

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What Have You Done, Davy? by Brigitte Weninger, Scholastic Inc., 1996

What Do You Say When a Monkey Acts This Way?, by Jane Belk Moncure, The Child's World, Inc., 1988

What Do You Do With a Grumpy Kangaroo?, by Jane Belk Moncure, The Child's World, Inc., 1988